

Themes: *War, Medicine, Independence, Inspiration, Domestic Life, Motherhood*

Summary

War reached England in 1914, and Archie departed with the Flying Corps. Agatha threw herself into VAD work, first as a ward maid and later nursing in the wards, learning quickly the realities of hospital life. Though initially eager but ignorant, she adapted to the hierarchies of the hospital, gaining practical knowledge and overcoming moments of shock, such as fainting at the sight of wounds during her first time in an operating theatre.

Living separate lives brought a new dynamic to her relationship with Archie. One evening, during a brief period of leave, he declared they must marry the following day. Sure enough, the two were wedded the next day in a small, hastily arranged ceremony in his parish church. Returning to the hospital as Mrs Christie, Agatha continued her duties, at which time her grandmother moved to Ashfield, to receive help from from the family.

Agatha later moved to the hospital dispensary, where apothecary training gave her an intricate knowledge of poisons, sparking the idea for her first detective story. She wrote *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and began the lengthy process of submitting it to publishers. After the war ended, as she and Archie settled in London and welcomed their daughter Rosalind, she finally received an acceptance. With finances tight, she continued to write, unaware she was laying the foundations for her future career.

Quotes

"From the beginning I enjoyed nursing. I took to it easily, and found it, and have always found it, one of the most rewarding professions that anyone can follow."

"Just as the ceremony was about to start, I thought for one sad moment that no bride could have taken less trouble about her appearance."

"Since I was surrounded by poisons, perhaps it was natural that death by poisoning should be the method I selected."

"I had married the man I loved, we had a child, we had somewhere to live, and as far as I could see there was no reason why we shouldn't live happily ever after."

Questions

- What did you learn about Agatha's relationship with Archie?
- How much of Christie's environment do you think inspired her creativity? Do you think this contributed to the quality of her work?
- What was it like to read about the process of finding somewhere to live, and finding a nurse and maid? What similarities or differences could you see to the current day?
- Did you know Christie originally wanted to write under a pseudonym? Do you think things would have been different if she had?
- What do you make of Christie's feelings towards Hercule Poirot and the mystery genre in this section?